



promoting physical activity
in the workplace

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workplace

a simple guide

why promote physical activity at work?

It is estimated that 60% of the population do not participate in levels of physical activity that will promote good health. Many of these people are employed in your organisation. As inactivity is a major risk factor for diseases such as coronary heart disease, this may place a serious/major burden on the health of your workforce.

Taking action to prevent ill health and promote good health makes good business sense for all employers. Sickness absence can cost employers dearly. In contrast, a healthier workforce can provide benefits to an organisation. Physical activity can play a role in promoting the health of employees. Participating in appropriate physical activity can provide the employee with both physical and mental health benefits. Workplace sponsored sports and activity clubs can provide a forum to promote good social contact amongst all levels of staff.

what can a workplace do to promote physical activity?

There are numerous ways in which an organisation can promote physical activity, some of which are VERY SIMPLE and inexpensive. These include:

- promoting activities such as stairwalking and walking at lunch times
- providing bicycle racks to encourage people to cycle to work
- providing information on local opportunities for physical activity. This could include:
 - maps of local walking trails
 - information on sports and leisure facilities, classes and clubs
 - publicising physical activity through notice-boards and newsletters
 - providing advice booklets.
- purchasing corporate memberships of local authority sporting facilities or health clubs. Some local authorities offer attractive inexpensive packages for workplaces which allow employees reduced admission fees to facilities
- providing on-site facilities (this is an option which many large employers take)
- providing changing facilities and lockers for those who wish to participate in more vigorous activities in and around the working day
- providing incentives to promote physical activity as opposed to car use during the working day. In areas where traffic is congested, encouraging employees to use bicycles and public transport can often cut down on travelling time. Some employers now offer the equivalent car mileage rate for such travel. This measure promotes not only the individual's health but also the health of the environment



- supporting sports and activity clubs such as work football and hockey teams, badminton and squash ladders and jogging groups
- supporting and publicising events such as Walkaboutabit and fun runs.

what steps should be taken?

There are a few simple stages involved in the process.

- 1 Ensure that there is a mechanism by which management and the workforce can consult. A large organisation may form a special group, or use an existing consultative group, whereas a small organisation may take a less formal approach by simply discussing options with the workforce.
- 2 Take advice from external agencies such as health boards and local authorities. Most have specialists who will be glad to help.
- 3 Identify the needs of those in the organisation. This can be done via discussion groups or by using a simple questionnaire (the external agencies can help in this area).
- 4 Implement your chosen course of action. Ensure that you promote and encourage uptake throughout the year.
- 5 Review your initiative at the end of each year by gaining feedback from the workforce.

agencies who can provide support

Health promotion/health education departments

You can telephone your local health board (listed under 'Health' in your telephone directory).

Local authority sports, leisure and recreation departments

The contact for your local department will be listed in the telephone directory.

SportScotland

This agency will provide information on a vast range of sports and physical activities (Tel. 0131 317 7200).



for more information contact

action notes

